

CLAIM AMENDMENTS

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1. (previously amended) A method for processing a plurality of undeliverable mail items comprising the steps of:
 - encoding data including identification information on each of a plurality of mail items prior to mailing;
 - receiving those items of the plurality of mail items that are returned as being undeliverable; and
 - scanning and processing the encoded data on the items of undeliverable mail.
 2. (previously amended) The method for processing a plurality of undeliverable mail items of claim 1 wherein the step of encoding data includes placing an optically encoded barcode on each of the plurality of mail items.
 3. (original) The method for processing a plurality of undeliverable mail items of claim 2 wherein the barcode is a two-dimensional barcode.
 4. (original) The method for processing a plurality of undeliverable mail items of claim 3 wherein the two-dimensional barcode is a Portable Data File 417 (PDF417) barcode.
 5. (original) The method for processing a plurality of undeliverable mail items of claim 1 further comprising the step of loading the plurality of undeliverable mail items on a transport mechanism for sorting into a plurality of categories.

6. (original) The method for processing a plurality of undeliverable mail items of claim 5 wherein the plurality of categories includes a barcode not decoded category and a barcode decoded successfully category.
7. (previously amended) The method for processing a plurality of undeliverable mail items of claim 1 wherein the step of scanning the encoded data on the undeliverable mail includes reading an optically encoded barcode on each item and decoding the barcode to determine the identification information associated with an intended recipient of the item.
8. (original) The method for processing a plurality of undeliverable mail items of claim 7 further comprising the step of generating an output file from the scanned and decoded data in the optically encoded barcode.
9. (previously amended) The method for processing a plurality of undeliverable mail items of claim 8 further comprising the step of transmitting the generated output file to a mailing address service provider in order to obtain a different address for each intended recipient of an undeliverable mail item.
10. (previously amended) A method for processing returned mail items sent by a subscriber to a recipient, the returned mail items incorporating encoded identification information, the method comprising the steps of:

collecting the returned mail items at a processing location;
reading the encoded information from the returned mail items;
electronically gathering updated information including a different address of the
intended recipient; and
electronically transmitting updated information to the subscriber for updating of
a subscriber's address database.

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11. (previously amended) The method for processing returned mail items of claim 10 wherein the encoded information is placed in an optically encoded barcode on each of the plurality of mail items.
12. (original) The method for processing returned mail items of claim 11 wherein the barcode is a two-dimensional barcode.
13. (original) The method for processing returned mail items of claim 12 wherein the two-dimensional barcode is a Portable Data File 417 (PDF417) barcode.
14. (original) The method for processing returned mail items of claim 10 further comprising the step of loading the plurality of undeliverable mail items on a transport mechanism for sorting into a plurality of categories.
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15. (original) The method for processing returned mail items of claim 14 wherein the plurality of categories includes a barcode not decoded category and a barcode decoded successfully category.
16. (previously amended) The method for processing returned mail items of claim 10 wherein the step of reading the encoded information includes scanning an optically encoded barcode on each item and decoding the barcode to determine identification information associated with the intended recipient of the item.
17. (original) The method for processing returned mail items of claim 16 further comprising the step of generating an output file from the scanned and decoded data in the optically encoded barcode.
18. (original) The method for processing returned mail items of claim 17 further comprising the step of transmitting the generated output file to a mailing address service provider in order to obtain a different address for each intended recipient of an undeliverable mail item.
19. (currently amended) A computer readable medium containing a computer program product for processing controlling a computer system to process a plurality of undeliverable mail items, the computer program product comprising:

program instructions that capture optically scanned encoded data including identification information on each item of undeliverable mail;
program instructions that store the captured optically scanned data in a data file;
program instructions that update the stored data to reflect a different address of the intended recipient of each item of undeliverable mail; and
program instructions that transmit the updated stored data to a subscriber in electronic form to update the address files of the subscriber.

20. (currently amended) The computer program product for processing controlling a computer system to process a plurality of undeliverable mail items of claim 19 wherein the encoded data is placed in an optically encoded barcode on each mail item.
21. (currently amended) The computer program product for processing controlling a computer system to process a plurality of undeliverable mail items of claim 20 wherein the bar code is a two-dimensional bar code.
22. (currently amended) The computer program product for processing controlling a computer system to process a plurality of undeliverable mail items of claim 19 wherein the encoded identification information includes a name and current address associated with the intended recipient of the mail item.

23. (currently amended) The computer program product for ~~processing~~ controlling a computer system to process a plurality of undeliverable mail items of claim 19 further comprising program instructions that transmit the stored data file electronically to a mailing address service provider in order to obtain a different address for each intended recipient of an undeliverable mail item.
24. (previously amended) A system for processing a plurality of undeliverable mail items comprising:
- a scanner for reading optically encoded data that includes identification information on each item of undeliverable mail;
 - a processor for operation of a computer program for capturing the identification information in the encoded data and writing the identification information into a data file; and
 - a database for storing the data file containing identification information.
25. (previously amended) The system for processing a plurality of undeliverable mail items of claim 24 wherein the computer program includes instructions that update the stored data in the data file with a different address associated with each of the undeliverable mail items.
26. (previously amended) The system for processing a plurality of undeliverable mail items of claim 24 wherein the computer program [product] includes instructions that deliver the

updated stored data to a subscriber in electronic form for use in updating the address files of the subscriber.

27. (previously amended) The system for processing a plurality of undeliverable mail items of claim 24 wherein the optically encoded data contains a two-dimensional bar code.

28. (previously added) The method for processing a plurality of undeliverable mail items of claim 1, wherein the step of processing encoded data comprises the steps of:

storing the encoded data in a data file;

updating the stored data to correct the address of each intended recipient of the items of undeliverable mail; and

delivering the updated data to a subscriber for use in updating the mailing address files of the subscriber.

29. (previously added) The method for processing a plurality of undeliverable mail items of claim 1, wherein the identification information encoded on each mail item includes a name and current address associated with an intended recipient of the mail item.

30. (previously added) The method for processing a plurality of undeliverable mail items of claim 2, wherein the optically encoded bar code is placed on either the front side or the back side of each mail item.

31. (previously added) The method for processing a plurality of undeliverable mail items of claim 2, wherein the optically encoded bar code is placed in a return address section on each of the plurality of mail items.
32. (previously added) The method for processing a plurality of undeliverable mail items of claim 11, wherein the optically encoded bar code is placed on either the front side or the back side of each mail item.
33. (previously added) The method for processing a plurality of undeliverable mail items of claim 11, wherein the optically encoded bar code is placed in a return address section on each of the plurality of mail items.
34. (previously added) The method for processing a plurality of undeliverable mail items of claim 20, wherein the optically encoded bar code is placed on either the front side or the back side of each mail item.
35. (previously added) The method for processing a plurality of undeliverable mail items of claim 20, wherein the optically encoded bar code is placed in a return address section on each of the plurality of mail items.

36. (previously added) The system for processing a plurality of undeliverable mail items of claim 24, further comprising a mail transport device for conveying the plurality of undeliverable items and sorting the undeliverable mail items into a plurality of bins.

37. (previously added) The system for processing a plurality of undeliverable mail items of claim 24, wherein the scanner is a hand-held device.

38. (previously added) The system for processing a plurality of undeliverable mail items of claim 24, wherein the scanner is a mixed media optical character recognition (MLOCR) device.